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December 12, 2006

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### **TENNESSEE COUNTY HEALTH RANKINGS RELEASED**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. --- Tennessee counties now have more information about the health of their citizens. The newly formed Tennessee Institute of Public Health (TNIPH) today released the state's first County Health Rankings: 2006 Index, rating the health of the public for each county in an effort to improve the overall health of Tennesseans. TNIPH plans to release updated rankings annually.

Factors in the scoring system include not only a health analysis of a county's citizens, but other socioeconomic factors that can relate to a population's overall health. The higher the score for that county the lower the county ranks.

The release of Tennessee's first county health rankings comes on the heels of the United Health Foundation's annual public health rankings of all 50 states. The County Health Ranking scoring system is based on similar data used in the state-by-state rankings.

"These rankings give a perspective of societal, environmental and health-related issues that are impacting the wellbeing of our citizens in this state," said Jo Edwards, Ed.D., director of the Tennessee Institute for Public Health. "The United Health Foundation ranked Tennessee 47th in overall health, so ultimately every county in the state is in need of improvement, regardless of this county-by-county ranking. Improving the overall health of the state will take the combined efforts of individuals, local communities, local and state government, as well the business and health community, and educational and non-profit organizations."

The ranking focuses on combining two categories of health measures, categorized as "health outcomes" and "health determinants." Outcomes show the overall health status of a county population, while determinants function as predictors of the population's future health.

The rankings analyze 34 different aspects of population health, including mortality, birth weight, health status, access to health care, health behaviors, education levels, racial disparities, poverty and environmental factors.

The rankings provide a tool for county, regional and decision makers to target areas of local importance and to apply human and available financial resources for change.

(MORE)

County Health Rankings Released

“The rankings may be a surprise to some and serve as continued motivation for others who are already working to improve the health status of our state’s population. Some of the health outcomes and determinants require an individual citizen to make sound decisions to improve their health, while other issues may require changes in state law. The bottom line is there is something all of us can do to improve our health,” said Edwards.

The rankings were developed by TNIPH through a collaboration of the Tennessee Department of Health, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, the Tennessee Board of Regents and the University of Tennessee. Similar institutes exist in 26 other states.

Through its partners, TNIPH will be a resource for non-biased information to the state as well as encourage the development of targeted educational programs to help build and support the public health workforce. It will develop and maintain an inventory of available researchers across the state who are capable of addressing specific Tennessee health issues.

More information about TNIPH can be found at [www.state.tn.us/tniph](http://www.state.tn.us/tniph).